

Message Text

SECRET

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INFO AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA PRIORITY
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 18371

EXDIS (DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS)

FOR THE SECRETARY AND SAUNDERS

JERUSALEM FOR ATHERTON AND LEWIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR PEPR PGOV EG IS US
SUBJECT: EGYPT AND THE SECRETARY'S UPCOMING TRIP

SUMMARY: FOR EGYPTIANS PRIME FOCUS OF SECRETARY'S
UPCOMING VISIT WILL BE TO OBTAIN CLARIFICATION OF USG
POSITION. WE ARE RECEIVING REPEATED SIGNALS, OFFICIAL
AND PRIVATE, THAT IT IS TIME FOR USG TO TAKE A FIRM
PUBLIC STANCE IN ACCORDANCE WITH PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED
OFFICIAL POSITIONS. DESPITE CONSTANT ASSURANCES, EGYPTIANS
HAVE SOMEHOW GAINED IMPRESSION THAT WE ARE EQUIVOCATING
ON EARLIER COMMITMENTS. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE IN
WEST BANK WHERE EGYPTIANS FEEL EXPOSED IN NEGOTIATING
WITH ISRAELIS AND CANNOT AFFORD TO AGREE TO ANYTHING THAT
IS LIKELY TO BE REJECTED BY HUSSEIN, THE PALESTINIANS
AND MODERATE ARABS. IN CIRCUMSTANCES, THE IMPORTANCE OF
WEST BANK BORDER RECTIFICATIONS BEING LIMITED TO "MINOR"
FIGURES PROMINENTLY IN THIS CALCULUS. THE DEGREE OF
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REASSURANCE THAT THE SECRETARY CAN GIVE SADAT ON THESE
POINTS WILL DETERMINE HIS WILLINGNESS TO TRY ANOTHER
ROUND OF TRILATERAL TALKS. FAILING THAT, SADAT WILL
HAVE TO MAKE SOME HARD DECISIONS BEFORE OCTOBER AND IS
ALREADY CONSIDERING POSSIBILITY OF NOT RENEWING UNEF.
END SUMMARY.
1. IT IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY CLEAR THAT THE EGYPTIANS

ARE LOOKING AT THE SECRETARY'S UPCOMING TRIP PRIMARILY IN TERMS OF OBTAINING CLARIFICATION OF THE USG POSITION. SADAT MADE THIS POINT TO ROY ATHERTON AND ME AND THE MESSAGE IS BEING WIDELY REPEATED IN TALKS THAT WE ARE HAVING WITH OFFICIAL AND PRIVATE EGYPTIANS AND IN THE EGYPTIAN PUBLIC MEDIA. THE TIME HAS COME, THE EGYPTIANS ARE SIGNALING, FOR THE USG TO TAKE A FIRM PUBLIC STANCE IN ACCORDANCE WITH PRONOUNCEMENTS MADE BY PRESIDENT CARTER, THE POSITION THAT ALL AMERICAN ADMINISTRATIONS HAVE CONVEYED TO THE ARABS (INCLUDING THE EGYPTIANS) SINCE 1967, AND WHAT SADAT PERCEIVES TO BE OUR COMMON STRATEGY. THE EGYPTIANS ARE NOT ESPECIALLY CONCERNED WITH THE PROSPECT THAT A TOUGH AMERICAN POSITION COULD ALIENATE PRIMIN BEGIN TO A POINT WHERE THE ISRAELIS WILL NOT PLAY. DESPITE ROY ATHERTON'S AND MY BEST EFFORTS, THEY HAVE THEMSELVES DECIDED THAT BEGIN IS NOT IN ANY CASE PREPARED TO PLAY. UNFORTUNATELY, THE LEEDS CONFERENCE REAFFIRMED THAT JUDGMENT OR AT LEAST OUR EGYPTIAN FRIENDS NOW PRETEND THAT IT DID.

2. IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT THE EGYPTIANS FROM SADAT ON DOWN HAVE SOMEHOW GAINED THE IMPRESSION THAT WE ARE EQUIVOCATING ON OUR EARLIER COMMITMENTS. BOTH ROY AND I HAVE SOUGHT TO IMPRESS UPON THEM THAT THIS IS NOT THE CASE, BUT THEY BELIEVE WE ARE SPEAKING MORE FOR THE RECORD THAN REFLECTING A FIRM UNITED STATES DETERMINATION TO DO
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SO.

3. THIS IS ESPECIALLY THE CASE AFTER WE HAVE PERSUADED THE EGYPTIANS TO PLAY A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN WEST BANK (AS OPPOSED TO GAZA) NEGOTIATIONS. SADAT IS NOW "ON POINT" IN BEHALF OF THE ARABS, KING HUSSEIN AND THE PALESTINIANS. HE CANNOT AFFORD TO APPEAR TO BE IGNORING THEIR INTERESTS IF HE HOPES TO CONTINUE TO PLAY A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN THE ARAB WORLD AND TO RECEIVE NEEDED SAUDI AND GULF LARGESSE. HE HAS NOT BEEN MANDATED BY ANYBODY TO PLAY THIS ROLE, HENCE HE AND ESPECIALLY HIS COLLEAGUES ARE CONSTANTLY LOOKING OVER THEIR BACKS AS THEY ENGAGE IN TALKS ON THE SUBJECT. IN PRIVATE TALKS WITH SENIOR AMERICAN OFFICIALS, SADAT HAS DONE A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF POSTURING ABOUT WHAT HE MIGHT DO IF HUSSEIN DOES NOT COME IN AND HAS GIVEN AN IMPRESSION OF GREATER FLEXIBILITY THAN HE CAN IN FACT EXERCISE. SADAT DID SO TO SHOW HIS GOOD INTENTIONS AND IN HIS OWN WAY HE MEANS WHAT HE SAYS. YET, WHEN PUSH COMES TO SHOVE, SADAT CANNOT AFFORD TO AGREE TO ANYTHING IN THE WEST BANK THAT IS LIKELY TO BE REJECTED BY HUSSEIN, THE PALESTINIANS AND OTHER MODERATE ARABS--LET ALONE THE REJECTIONISTS. WERE HE TO DO SO,

AND THERE IS A REAL QUESTION WHETHER HIS OWN PEOPLE (INCLUDING GAMASY) WOULD ALLOW HIM TO DO SO, HE WOULD BE DISCREDITED AMONG MODERATE AND REJECTIONIST ARABS ALIKE. THE FARCE TRIAL OF SADAT THAT RECENTLY BEGAN IN BAGHDAD MIGHT WELL BE SHIFTED TO AMMAN OR DAMASCUS.

4. IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT THE TERRITORIAL AND RELATED SOVEREIGNTY ISSUES ASSUME SUCH IMPORTANCE. ALL

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EXDIS (DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS)

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

OTHER ISSUES ARE NEGOTIABLE. SADAT HAS BEEN COUNTING ON OUR FREQUENTLY REITERATED POSITION THAT BORDER RECTIFICATIONS IN THE WEST BANK SHOULD BE "MINOR". WHAT "MINOR" REALLY MEANS IS STILL NEGOTIABLE, BUT HE SHARES THE INTERPRETATION OF OTHER ARABS THAT THE TERM SHOULD BE TAKEN LITERALLY. SADAT IS CONCERNED THAT WE ARE QUIETLY DISENGAGING FROM THIS CONCEPT, AND HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES NOTE THAT THE PRELIMINARY INDICATIONS WE HAVE GIVEN HIM ABOUT OUR IDEAS MAKE NO MENTION OF THIS SUBJECT. THE EGYPTIANS ARE DEEPLY WORRIED AT WHAT THEY PERCEIVE TO BE INDICATIONS THAT WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO STAND UP TO ISRAEL ON THIS POINT AND THAT WE MAY BE SEEKING TO MANEUVER THEM INTO TERRITORIAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE ISRAELIS MORE ALONG LINES OF WHAT THE ISRAELIS WANT. THEY ALSO HAVE MISGIVINGS ABOUT OUR SOMETIME COMMENT THAT THE PREAMBULAR PRINCIPLE OF THE INADMISSIBILITY OF THE ACQUISITION OF TERRITORY BY FORCE, WHICH THEY RECALL AMBASSADOR GOLDBERG

INSERTED IN DRAFT UNSC RESOLUTION 242 AT THE LAST MINUTE
IN ORDER TO OBTAIN EGYPTIAN AGREEMENT, DOES NOT NOW
SEEM TO BE GIVEN THE SAME WEIGHT BY US AS THE OTHER
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PRINCIPLES CITED IN THAT RESOLUTION. ALL OF THIS PROMPTS
SADAT AND HIS ASSOCIATES TO CONCLUDE THAT THEY NEED A
CLEARER INDICATION THAN THEY HAVE RECENTLY GOTTEN OF
WHAT THE UNITED STATES IS WILLING ACTIVELY TO SUPPORT,
EVEN AGAINST STRONG ISRAELI OPPOSITION, BEFORE THEY
STICK THEIR NECKS OUT ON FURTHER TALKS WITH THE ISRAELIS.

5. THUS, SADAT MAY BE EXPECTED TO FOCUS ON THIS ASPECT
OF THE PROBLEM DURING THE SECRETARY'S UPCOMING TALKS.
HIS LITANY OF COMPLAINTS ABOUT BEGIN AND DAYAN ACTIONS
WILL BE PRESENTED PRIMARILY TO SUPPORT HIS CASE FOR A
CLEARCUT, POSITIVE UNITED STATES STANCE. THE DEGREE OF
REASSURANCE THAT THE SECRETARY CAN GIVE HIM ON THESE
POINTS WILL DETERMINE HIS WILLINGNESS TO TRY ANOTHER
ROUND OF TRILATERAL TALKS, BUT HE HAS DETERMINED NOT
TO SPIN THIS PROCESS OUT IN THE ABSENCE OF A FIRM AND
GENERALLY AGREEABLE UNITED STATES PROPOSAL. AS SADAT
HAS SAID TO US IN THE PAST, SOME MATTERS WILL HAVE TO BE
"FORCED" ON HIM FROM THE U.S. SIDE, BUT TERRITORIAL/
SOVEREIGNTY ASPECTS (EXCEPT FOR MINOR RECTIFICATIONS ON
WEST BANK) ARE NOT LIKELY TO FIT INTO THIS CATEGORY.

6. SADAT HAS SAID THAT IN SEPTEMBER HE WILL HAVE TO
DECIDE WHAT STEPS TO TAKE IF THERE HAS BEEN NO MOVEMENT
OR PROMISE OF MOVEMENT ON THE PEACE FRONT. WE KNOW HE
IS ALREADY ACTIVELY LOOKING INTO THE POSSIBILITY OF NOT
RENEWING UNEF AND HE DOUBTLESS HAS OTHER THOUGHTS IN
MIND. IT WILL AFTER OCTOBER BE DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO
WITHSTAND ARAB, AND PARTICULARLY SAUDI, EFFORTS TO PERSUADE
HIM TO ACCEPT THE PROPOSITION THAT HIS PEACE INITIATIVE
HAS IRREVOCABLY FOUNDERED ON THE ROCKS OF WHAT ARABS
PERCEIVE AS BEGIN'S HARDLINE POLICIES AND THAT ARAB
RECONCILIATION--WHATEVER THAT MAY MEAN--IS THE ONLY
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VIABLE ALTERNATIVE COURSE. SADAT HAS GREAT CONFIDENCE
IN THE SECRETARY AND HIS DECISION WILL IN LARGE PART BE
MADE IN THE LIGHT OF WHAT THE SECRETARY CAN TELL HIM.
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